



CRIME PREVENTION TIP

Protecting your Sanctuary

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With winter reluctantly leaving us and spring and summer at our doorstep, many families are getting ready to come out of hibernation and enjoy the sun. We all love the benefits that warmer weather brings, but it's also a time where intruders become more active. Nothing rains down on someone's day more than the experience of a break-in or intrusion, and the feeling of violation in insecurity aren't easily forgotten. Fortunately, there is a lot that we can do to deter intruders and keep our homes and families safe. Here's 10 gems of inexpensive or free ways to do just that:

1. As tempting as it is to brag about your upcoming vacation all over Facebook and other social media, you are setting your home up as a target for burglars. Some reports even indicate that intruders use Facebook to determine when homeowners were away, allowing them to plot the perfect times to burglarize their homes.
2. A dog's bark is, no doubt, a deterrent to thieves, but even if you don't have a dog—put up a “beware of dog” sign when anyway. The threat of Sparky might be enough to intimidate and make a burglar think twice about breaking in.

3. Don't tempt intruders with your pricey possessions. Throwing out the box for your new flat-screen TV or sound system on the curb lets everyone passing by know that you have well, a brand new flat-screen TV mounted on your wall. Break down packaging and place it inside the garbage can instead. Better yet, dispose of the packaging at a local recycling depot.

4. Motion-sensored lights outside your home and placed out of easy reach are a great deterrent for burglars. They'll run the other way when they find themselves standing in bright lights as they approach your house.

5. Install Window Treatments! Use blinds or curtains, especially at night. If someone can see inside your home, they can see what you're doing, where you're storing your wallet, which room you're sitting in to watch TV, and which rooms are dark and vacant.

6. Growing up, I remember our neighbour paid me a couple of dollars to go over to their house while they were away and turn on a few random lights and the radio every day. They had the right idea. These days you can set timers for lights to create the illusion that someone is home and actively turning the lights on and off.

7. Keep all doors and windows closed and securely fastened. An open window or door is like an open invitation for burglars. To secure sliding glass doors and windows, place a metal rod or piece of plywood in the track, preventing burglars from forcing the door open or lifting it off the track.

8. Keeping a car parked (locked or not) in the driveway with a garage door opener inside is an easy way for an intruder to get into your house if the garage is attached to your home. Always lock the door to an attached garage. Don't rely on your automatic garage door opener for security. It's also wise to hide or remove documents in your car that have your name and address on them. Intruders sometimes "shop" for these papers in car parking lots, and then proceed to the home where they know the owner is out shopping or running errands.

9. Ask your neighbour to collect your mail, packages and newspapers while you are away so they don't accumulate in plain sight. It's a golden ticket for intruders. For bonus points, ask a neighbour to park in your driveway or parking place to make it appear that you are present.

10. Landscaping helps the curb-appeal of your home, but large hedges and shrubbery provide the perfect hiding place for quick burglars who can break in through a window or door in minutes. Keep shrubbery trimmed away from your entrances and walkways. If it risks snowing while you are away, ask your neighbour to keep your walkway clean.

Prevention is the key to protecting your sanctuary, and paying close attention to these items listed can not only deter intruders, but also bring you the peace of mind needed to enjoy family vacations or just sleep soundly in your bed.